SHILAP Revista de Lepidopterología
ISSN: 0300-5267
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Sociedad Hispano-Luso-Americana de Lepidopterología
España

Catania, A.
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SHILAP Revista de Lepidopterología, vol. 39, núm. 154, junio, 2011, pp. 233-234
Sociedad Hispano-Luso-Americana de Lepidopterología
Madrid, España

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=45521389009

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233-234 Menophra abruptaria (Th 12/6/11 10:19 Página 233

SHILAP Revta. lepid., 39 (154), junio 2011: 233-234 CODEN: SRLPEF ISSN:0300-5267

Menophra abruptaria (Thunberg, 1792), a species new for the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Geometridae)

A. Catania

Abstract

Menophra abruptaria (Thunberg, 1792) is here recorded for the first time from the Maltese Islands.
KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Geometridae, *Menophra abruptaria,* Malta.

Menophra abruptaria **(Thunberg, 1792), una especie nueva para Malta (Lepidoptera: Geometridae)**

Resumen

Menophra abruptaria (Thunberg, 1792) se cita por primera vez para Malta.
PALABRAS CLAVES: Lepidoptera, Geometridae, *Menophra abruptaria,* Malta.

Introduction

Menophra abruptaria (Thunberg, 1792) is distributed throughout southern and western North Africa, southern Europe and Asia Minor. In northern Europe, it is found from the British Isles to Switzerland and south-western Germany (HAUSMANN *et al*., 2011).

In Malta the genus *Menophra* is represented by one other rare species *Menophra japygiaria* (O. Costa, 1849) (SAMMUT 2000). Although rare, this species has been recorded from various habitats and appears to be quite well established due to the fact that planting of olive trees, both for fruit and oil production and for ornamental purposes in landscaping has greatly increased in recent times.

Material examined

MALTA, Gozo, Zebbug, 2 ♂♂ , 26-III-2008, A. Catania leg. In collection A. Catania.

Bionomics and habitat

In Europe *Menophra abruptaria* (Thunberg, 1792) flies in a single generation between April and June. The larval host plants include *Ligustrum ovalifolium* Haask. and *Syringa vulgaris* L. both species belonging to the family Oleaceae. *Menophra abruptaria* (Thunberg, 1792) is recorded as inhibiting woodland, parks and gardens and is not known to be a migrant (SKINNER 1984).

233-234 Menophra abruptaria (Th 10/6/11 11:32 Página 234

Menopha abruptaria (Thunberg ,1792) MALTA, Gozo, Zebbug, ♂, 26-III-2008, A. Catania leg.

Discussion

This record is interesting as *Menophra abruptaria* is found in countries where *Ligustrum ovalifolium* and *Syringa vulgaris* grow. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* is easy to grow in most types of soils and so has been imported to Malta for landscaping. The highly decorative potted plants of the variegated *Ligustrum* can be seen for sale in local plant nurseries and this species could have easily been accidentally imported from Italy or Sicily, from where landscaping plants are imported (*pers. comm.* plant nursery owners). To date no further specimens of *abruptaria* have been recorded in Malta.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dr. Axel Hausmann for confirming the identity the species. Also thanks go to Mr. Paul Sammut for reviewing this paper and Dr. Antonio Vives for providing the Spanish translation of the abstract.

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(Recibido para publicación / *Received for publication* 17-I-2011)
(Revisado y aceptado / *Revised and accepted* 9-IV-2011)
(Publicado / *Published* 30-VI-2011)